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A CLASSIFICATION OF THE SOLOMONIC
PROVERBS.

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It is well known to most students of the Bible that the present arrangement of the collections of material in the Book of Proverbs is unsystematic and that many attempts have been made to discover an order of the two great collections of Solomonian proverbs. These collections make up the body of the book. The first embraces chapters ten to twenty-two; the second, chapters twenty-five to twenty-nine. Only a very few are found outside of these two collections.

In these collections, as has been well said, "the lack of connection between verses is so marked that the order might be changed without doing violence to the thought." The collectors seem to have paid little attention to arrangement, and indeed to have been utterly ignorant of any scientific system of classification whether artificial or natural. Numerous attempts have been made by many great scholars to find a key-word or a sign-letter as a principle on which the present arrangement may have been based, but all have failed.

We must, therefore, seek some other method, and there can be no better one than a systematic classification, namely, to change the order of the verses without doing violence to the thought of the Proverb.

When a principle of classification is sought it is found that, strictly speaking, there are only two ways in which these proverbs may be arranged. There is a classification by *form* and a classification by *thought*, one external, the other internal. But besides these there is a third which is partly external, partly internal. This is a classification by *parallelism*.

The most important of these three methods of arrangement is undoubtedly that according to *thought*. The thought

is more to us than the form. Like other biblical poetry, the spiritual idea rules over the artistic or æsthetic form. "The Hebrew writers, as poets," says Isaac Taylor, "were masters of all the means and the resources, the powers and the stores of the loftiest poetry, but subservient to a far loftier purpose than that which ever animates human genius."

As a help toward study of the contents of the Solomonian Proverbs and toward a better understanding of the stores of wisdom contained in them, the writer has prepared the following tables, which aim to give a complete arrangement of these two Solomonian collections according to their thought.

TABLE I. [General Statement.]

1. Social-Political Proverbs.....	111
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TABLE II. [Detailed Classification.]

I. SOCIAL-POLITICAL PROVERBS.

1. *The Family.*

1) Family-relations.

- (1) Husband and wife. 18:22; 19:14; 12:4; 11:16; 14:1.
(Woman in general.) 11:22; 21:9; 25:24; 19:13; 27:15.
- (2) Parents and children. 10:1; 15:20; 17:25; 19:26; 20:20;
23:24; 17:21; 19:13; 28:7; 29:3.
- (3) Old and young. 20:29; 17:6; 20:7; 13:22.
- (4) Long life. 10:27; 16:31.
- (5) Brother. 18:19.
- (6) Master and Servant. 27:18; 29:21; 17:2; 11:29; 12:24; 29:19;
26:10; 19:10.

2) Family affairs.

- (1) Eating. 15:17; 17:1; 13:25; 25:16; 27:7; 19:24; 26:15.
- (2) Sleeping. 19:15; 26:14.
- (3) Hunting. 12:7.
- (4) Friendly visiting. 25:17.

2. *The State.*

1) The King.

- (1) Kingship. 25 : 2, 3 ; 16 : 15 ; 19 : 12.
- (2) King and Subject. 25 : 4, 5 ; 29 : 12 ; 14 : 35 ; 20 : 2 ; 16 : 13, 14 ; 22 : 11.
- (3) Princes and Nobles. 25 : 6, 7 ; 17 : 7.
- (4) War. 21 : 31, 22 ; 20 : 18.
- (5) Royal Messenger. 25 : 13 ; 17 : 11 ; 13 : 17 ; 10 : 26 ; 26 : 6.
(Messenger in general.) 25 : 25.
- (6) Royal (right) gift. 18 : 16.

2) The People.

- (1) Ruler and People. 14 : 28, 36 ; 28 : 2 ; 29 : 2 ; 28 : 12, 28 ; 29 : 16 ; 28 : 16 ; 29 : 4 ; 28 : 15, 3.
- (2) Counselors. 11 : 14 ; 12 : 5, 20, 15.
- (3) The Light of Publicity. 26 : 26.
- (4) Love of Country. 10 : 30 ; 27 : 8.
- (5) City life. 11 : 11, 10 ; 29 : 8.
- (6) Rich and Poor. 22 : 2 ; 29 : 13 ; 14 : 31 ; 17 : 5 ; 22 : 16 ; 21 : 13 ; 19 : 22 ; 29 : 14, 7 ; 28 : 6 ; 19 : 1 ; 14 : 20 ; 19 : 7, 4 ; 13 : 8 ; 28 : 11 ; 18 : 23 ; 22 : 7.

II. LEGAL PROVERBS.

1. *God the Lawgiver.* 21 : 30, 1 ; 16 : 10 ; 29 : 26.2. *Kings under the Divine Law.* 20 : 28 ; 16 : 12 ; 29 : 4 (cf. class 1).3. *A King as judge.* 25 : 2 (class 1) ; 20 : 8, 26 ; 29 : 14 (class 1).4. *Judges.*

- 1) Special Warning. 17 : 15, 26 ; 29 : 7.
- 2) The Evil of Partiality. 18 : 5 ; 28 : 21.
- 3) The Sin of Bribery. 17 : 23 ; 21 : 14 ; 17 : 8 ; 15 : 27.

5. *Law Courts.*

- 1) Law suit. 18 : 17 ; 25 : 15.
- 2) Lot. 16 : 33 ; 18 : 18.
- 3) Oath (?). 29 : 24.
- 4) Witness. 12 : 17 ; 14 : 5, 25 ; 21 : 28 ; 19 : 5, 9, 28 ; 25 : 18.
- 5) Suretyship. 11 : 15 ; 20 : 16 ; 27 : 13 ; 17 : 18.

6. *Particular Laws.*

- 1) Weights and Measures. 11 : 1 ; 20 : 10, 23 ; 16 : 11.
- 2) Usury. 28 : 8 ; 11 : 26.
- 3) Oppression of the Poor. 29 : 13 ; 14 : 31 ; 17 : 5.
- 4) Removing the landmark. 15 : 25.
- 5) Cruelty to animals. 12 : 10.
- 6) Right of inheritance. 19 : 14 ; 17 : 2.
- 7) A disobedient Son. 20 : 20 ; 19 : 18.
- 8) Unchastity. 22 : 14 ; 29 : 3 ; 12 : 4.
- 9) The Murderer. 28 : 17 ; 29 : 10.

7. *Punishment.* 19 : 25 ; 21 : 11 ; 19 : 29, 19.

III. ECONOMIC PROVERBS.

1. *Wealth.*

- 1) Wealth and Righteousness. 15:6; 11:28; 10:2; 11:4; 10:16; 11:18;
15:16; 16:8.
- 2) Wealth and Wisdom. 16:16.
- 3) Wealth and Knowledge. 20:15.
- 4) Wealth and Honor. 22:1.
- 5) Wealth itself. 10:15; 18:11; 12:24.
- 6) The use of Wealth. 11:24.
- 7) Human wants. 16:26; 20:13.
- 8) Human desires. 21:17, 20.

2. *Labor.*

- 1) Diligence. 10:22; 13:11; 12:14; 10:4; 13:4; 21:25, 26.
- 2) Slothful workers. 12:24, 27; 14:23.
- 3) The evil of Laziness. 18:9; 22:13; 26:13; 19:24; 26:15; 19:15;
26:14.

3. *Industrial life.*

- 1) Patriarchal life. 27:23-27.
- 2) Agricultural life. 10:5; 12:11; 28:19; 12:9; 13:23; 20:4; 14:4.
- 3) Commercial life. 20:14; 22:7; 11:26; 21:5; 28:20, 22; 20:21; 21:6;
20:17; 13:7.

IV. EDUCATIONAL PROVERBS.

1. *Three great subjects.*

- 1) Wisdom. 15:33; 11:2; 13:10; 14:33; 28:26; 14:8; 10:31, 23.
- 2) Understanding. 28:5; 19:8; 11:12; 15:21; 18:2.
- 3) Knowledge. 22:12; 17:27; 18:15; 14:6, 7; 12:23; 10:14; 13:16;
14:8; 15:7, 2; 11:9; 15:14; 19:2.

2. *Human Speech.*

- 1) Word. 13:4; 25:11; 16:24; 15:4; 10:11; 13:21, 20; 12:19; 10:32;
12:18, 6; 14:3; 12:13; 18:7.
- 2) Word and Thought. 16:23, 21; 15:26; 10:20, 21; 13:2; 16:27.
- 3) The use of Words. 15:1, 23, 28; 18:13; 26:4, 5; 29:9; 22:10;
25:9, 10; 11:13; 20:9; 10:19; 13:3; 21:23; 29:20; 17:28.
- 4) Proverbs. 26:7, 9.

3. *Instruction.* 12:1; 15:32; 25:12; 15:31; 10:17; 15:10; 13:14, 18, 1; 15:5; 19:27.

4. *Discipline.* 13:24; 17:10; 20:30; 19:18; 21:29; 16:22; 29:1; 26:3; 10:3; 27:22.

5. *The Value of Education.* 19:20; 29:17; 17:16.

6. *The Education of a Youth.* 27:11; 15:12; 14:15; 17:24; 25:27; 26:11, 12, 16.

7. *Child training.* 20:11; 22:6, 15; 29:15.

V. ETHICO-RELIGIOUS PROVERBS.

[I.] ETHICAL PROVERBS.

1. *Duties to Self.*

- 1) Self-denial. 16:32; 25:28, 17.
- 2) Self-control (in appetites). 13:25; 25:16.
- 3) Drunkenness. 20:1; 21:17.
- 4) Levity. 25:20.
- 5) Prudence. 22:3; 27:12; 12:16; 20:5.
- 6) Righteousness and Godliness. 29:27; 11:30; 28:1; 21:15; 29:6;
11:5, 6; 13:6; 12:3, 12; 11:3; 12:26; 10:9; 28:18; 16:17; 13:15;
15:19; 22:5; 21:8; 19:3; 16:29; 18:3.
- 7) Hope. 13:19, 12; 11:23, 7; 10:28, 26, 3.

2. *Duties to one's fellow-man.*

- 1) Veracity.
 - (1) Lying. 12:22; 13:5; 17:20, 4; 26:28, 24, 25, 23, 18, 19.
 - (2) Slander and Flattery. 18:8; 26:22; 29:5; 25:23; 26:20; 28; 23.
 - (3) Malicious Conduct. 10:10; 16:30.
- 2) A False Promise. 25:14.
- 3) Pride and Humility. 18:12; 16:18; 29:23; 16:19; 21:4, 24.
- 4) Boasting. 27:1, 2.
- 5) Contention. 17:14; 26:21, 17; 20:3; 17:19; 18:6; 25:8.
- 6) Anger. 29:22; 15:18; 14:29, 17; 29:11; 17:12; 27:3.
- 7) Love and Hatred. 10:12; 15:17; 17:9; 27:5; 10:18.
- 8) Revenge or vindictiveness. 20:22; 19:11.
- 9) Doing good to an enemy. 25:21, 22.
- 10) Friendship. 18:24; 17:17; 27:9, 6, 17; 13:20; 20:6; 25:19; 16:28.
- 11) Jealousy. 27:4; 14:30.
- 12) Covetousness. 27:20.
- 13) Selfishness. 21:13; 18:1; 21:10.
- 14) Liberality. 11:25; 19:17; 14:21; 28:27; 22:9; (almsgiving) 19:6;
11:17; 19:22.
- 15) Honor. 14:19; 26:1, 8; 27:21; 12:8; 10:7.

3. *Duties to Animals.* 12:10.

[II.] RELIGIOUS PROVERBS.

1. *Of God.*

- 1) The Divine Name.
 - (1) Jehovah: occurs fifty-nine times in the two collections.
 - (2) God (Elohim): once in 25:2.
 - (3) The Righteous One. 21:12.
- 2) Omniscience. 15:3, 11; 16:4; 20:12; 22:2.
- 3) Disposer of all things. 16:1, 9; 19:21; 20:24.
- 4) Weigher of hearts. 16:2; 21:2; 17:3.
- 5) Delight or Abomination of God. 11:20; 15:9; 16:5; 12:2; 11:27.
- 6) The Judgment of God. 21:12; 14:14; 22:4; 21:21; 14:22; 13:21;
13:9; 11:19; 12:21, 7; 11:21; 17:13; 22:18; 21:7; 28:10; 26:27.

- 7) The Godless as a ransom for the Righteous. 11 : 8 ; 21 : 18.
- 8) The Law as the Word of God. 16 : 20 ; 13 : 13 ; 19 : 16 ; 28 : 4 ; 10 : 8.

2. *Of Man.*

- 1) Man as a finite being. 14 : 12 ; 16 : 25 ; 20 : 6 ; 27 : 1.
- 2) The Spirit of Man. 20 : 27 ; 18 : 14 ; 27 : 19.
- 3) Joy and Sorrow. 14 : 10, 13 ; 12 : 25 ; 15 : 30 ; 17 : 22 ; 15 : 13.
- 4) Sin.
 - (1) Nature of Sin. 20 : 9.
 - (2) Confession of Sin. 28 : 13.
 - (3) Fear of man. 29 : 25 ; 25 : 26.
 - (4) Reconciliation. 16 : 7.
 - (5) Atonement. 16 : 6.
- 5) Sacrifice. 21 : 3 ; 15 : 8 ; 21 : 27 ; 14 : 9.
- 6) Feast (?). 15 : 15.
- 7) Prophecy. 29 : 18.
- 8) Blessing and Curse. 10 : 6 ; 26 : 2 ; 27 : 14.
- 9) Vows. 20 : 25.
- 10) Prayer. 15 : 29 ; 28 : 9.
- 11) Faith in God. 16 : 3 ; 28 : 25 ; 18 : 10 ; 10 : 29.
- 12) The Fear of God. 14 : 26, 27 ; 19 : 23 ; 14 : 2 ; 28 : 14 ; 14 : 16.

3. *Of the Future Life.*

- 1) Immortality. 12 : 28.
- 2) Death (or Future punishment) 14 : 32 ; 11 : 7, 31 ; 10 : 25.
- 3) Sheol.
 - (1) All the dead alike. 15 : 11 ; 27 : 20.
 - (2) The godless only. 21 : 16 ; 15 : 24.

These tables suggest certain important lines of reflection in the direction of which the following remarks may be made.

The lack of historical proverbs and the very small number of philosophical proverbs is notable. While the Jewish name for God (Jehovah) is used fifty-nine times, the name Israel does not occur once. The law of the Sabbath, the payment of tithes, and the observance of feasts such as the Passover are altogether unnoticed. There are a few proverbs concerning sacrifice and yet sacrifice is not treated on its good side. There is no means of deciding whether the "Law," or the "commandment," of these collections is the written Sinaitic law or not. But in some cases they are used no doubt in a wider sense than that of a written code.

There is no reference to priests and prophets, although there is in a single proverb an allusion to Prophecy itself (29 : 18, *hazôn*, "vision," "revelation"). Of Messianic

Prophecy, the most prominent feature of the life of Israel, there is no mention. We have, however, three proverbs which may be regarded as historical, namely, 12: 7 (of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, according to Hitzig); 23: 8 (of the marching of Assyrian armies, according to Cheyne); and 10: 30 (of the Exile, according to Delitzsch). Perhaps, indeed, it is better to understand the meaning even of these as more general; the first one relating to the judgment of God, while the others have to do with the love of home or fatherland.

It is true that any attempt at organized systems of thought is never found in the whole literature of Hebrew Wisdom, and yet one cannot deny that there was a beginning of reflective literature as early as, if not before, the time of Solomon. Even a cursory reader of the Solomonian collections cannot fail to notice that a few proverbs, of God and of man, are of deep philosophical meaning. The following at least are philosophical: (1) of God;—as creator, 16: 4; 20: 12; 22: 2; as disposer of all things, 16: 1, 9; 19: 21; as omniscient, 15: 11; in His relation to human knowledge, 21: 30; 22: 12; 25: 2; 28: 5. (2) of Man;—as a finite being, 14: 10; 18: 14; 20: 6, 9, 24; 27: 1; human nature, 14: 13; 20: 27; 27: 17, 19, 20.